

Guidance Note – Bellringing

A number of churches have approached us for advice about bellringing demonstrations for the public on Heritage Open Days and similar events.

Churches and Tower Captains may occasionally wish to demonstrate the art of bellringing to the general public or simply to attract new people to learn how to ring. While bellringers will be well aware of the risks involved in entering church towers, the public may not, so we would ask you to make sure you read the guidelines below.

Your Ecclesiastical policy will cover the legal liability of parishes for injury to members of the public incurred following accidents during tower tours, open days and events provided all reasonable precautions are taken.

Every tower is different so each Tower Captain of any church planning a demonstration will need to carry out their own risk assessment. To help you we have a risk assessment form at www.ecclesiastical.com/safety. Our check list below will help you with your risk assessment.

- Have you worked out how many people, including ringers, you believe can safely be accommodated in the ringing chamber at any one time?
- Is all access to the tower by safe means with ladders and hatches avoided where possible?
- Have you made sure you have clear documented instructions on safety, covering, for example, not touching ropes, keeping feet on the ground and keeping out of the way whilst ringing in progress?
- Have you planned how these will be communicated and understood before visitors enter the ringing chamber?
- Have you arranged to have some experienced ringers on hand to steward and supervise whilst ringing is in progress?
- If there are stairs to climb to the ringing chamber have you checked for trip hazards?
- If there is a climb, how will you ensure that visitors are fit enough to undertake the climb?
- Do you have a prepared evacuation procedure in place in case of an unforeseen emergency?
- Have you made sure you have working mobile phones or alternative communication equipment to be able to raise the alarm without delay should anything go wrong?

Viewing the bells

If visitors are being allowed to see the bells as part of the experience, unless the tower incorporates specific arrangements for viewing the bells it is highly recommended that this is a visual inspection from the doorway of the bell chamber only. We recommend that bells are not rung while the visit is taking place, unless this is a single bell tolling to demonstrate how a bell works.

It remains the responsibility of the Tower Captain to assess what is practicable and safe given the arrangement and location of the ringing chamber, bell chamber and if appropriate any access to the roof.

If any public access to the roof is desired, please follow the rules and guidance in our Church Health and Safety Guidance Notes, which you can read at www.ecclesiastical.com/safety.

For further information call us on

0345 777 3322

(Monday to Friday 8am-6pm excluding bank holidays)
We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.

You can email us at

churches@ecclesiastical.com

Or visit

www.ecclesiastical.com/church

Other useful contacts

Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory

Services: **0800 107 0190**

www.ecclesiastical.com/getadvice

Ecclesiastical home insurance:

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www.ecclesiastical.com/churchworker

